

September 11, 2006

# Afgan Freedom

Combined Forces O

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'A&O' platoon clears path  
to success

Pages 14-15



**Air Force Master Sgt. Lorraine Guthrie installs safety wire on an APN-59 radar transmitter and receiver-set in the nose of a C-130 Hercules at Bagram Airfield. Guthrie is a communication and navigation system technician from the 176th Maintenance Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard.**

Photo by Air Force Maj. David Kurle  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing public affairs



**Cover: Army Cpl. Merlin Quiles, a combat engineer with Assault & Obstacle Platoon, A Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, points to an unsearched area adjacent to a bridge located on the road to Zormat during a route clearance mission conducted Aug. 29 in Paktya Province.**

Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Pintagro  
Task Force Spartan public affairs

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## *Afghanistan* **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

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# Doctors continue care for injured Afghan child

By Army Pfc.

Michael J. Nyeste

19th Public Affairs Detachment

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** -- Optometrists from 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) fitted a prosthetic eye shell into a young Afghan boy's damaged eye here Aug. 25.

Faisal Qayyumi's left eye was damaged due to a blast injury when he was 3 years old. Five years later, 10th Mountain ophthalmologists have taken steps to restoring a sense of normalcy to the young Afghan's life.

Faisal is shy and his father, Mohammad Qayyumi, says his quiet demeanor is largely due to the teasing Faisal has received from his peers because of the appearance of his damaged left eye.

"He is shy, but I think after all the procedures, his confidence will shoot up," Mohammad said. "My son's future should be better."

The most recent procedure included checking the healing progress of his eye two weeks after surgery was conducted and to get a proper fit for Faisal's prosthetic eye shell. The shell will give his damaged eye a normal appearance even though he will never be able to see out of it.

"It has been healing very well," said Army Cpt. Eric Guzman, 10th Mtn. Div. chief of optometry. "(Faisal has) had no pain and no problems."

After seeing how well the eye had healed, the doctors then took measurements of Faisal's eye. They did this to ensure the most accurate and best looking prosthetic shell would be ordered as soon as possible.

They then put it in a non-fitted shell to see if Faisal's eye could tolerate it. Faisal did experience some normal irritations, but all signs were good, according to Guzman.

The doctors then performed tests to see if Faisal's damaged



Photo by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste

**Faisal's eye is carefully inspected by Army Maj. Ronald Allen to see how well his damaged left eye had healed two weeks after Faisal went through surgery.**

eye would track and coincide with the movements of his other eye.

With the test shell in place, the tracking movement tests indicated that Faisal will soon be able to receive his own custom fit prosthetic shell with no complications and have a sense

a normalcy he hasn't felt in half a decade, said Guzman.

"I think all of this will drastically improve his self-esteem," said Army Maj. Ronald Allen, 10th Mtn. Div. chief of ophthalmology. "That's what we're here for - to help Afghans."

## Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



### Afghan cultural tidbit

Photo by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste, 19th Public Affairs Detachment

**You are a good friend.**

Dari

Shuma yak doste khoob hasted.  
(Shoo-ma yak doe-stay khoob has-tand.)

Pashtu

Tasoo yow khu malgeray yaste.  
(Tah-soo yow khoo mal-gah-ray yaws-tay.)

**The two main languages spoken in Afghanistan are Dari and Pashtu. Dari, derived from "darbari," meaning the language of the court of kings, is spoken in the central, northern and western provinces of Afghanistan. Pashtu is spoken in the eastern, southern and southeastern provinces.**



# Civil Affairs Teams work hard to better life in Panjshir

**By Army Spc.**

**James Tamez**

**19th Public Affairs Detachment**

**PANJSHIR VALLEY, Afghanistan** -- Coalition forces in Afghanistan have many missions but one ultimate goal -- to help the people of Afghanistan.

This is the primary mission for provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs. The civil affairs teams for the Panjshir PRT work with local villages here to help better the quality of life for Afghan citizens.

The CATs have assisted in the building of wells, roads, schools and various other projects.

"We provide the assessments of the different villages in the area," said Army Staff Sgt. Gary Beiswanger, noncommissioned officer in charge, CAT A, Panjshir PRT.

While making assessments, the CATs gather grid coordinates to better identify the areas in need of help,

Beiswanger said. This also helps in the case of emergencies, like mudslides, which are known to happen in the area. This better assists the PRT in providing things like providing medical assistance, emergency relief and humanitarian aid supplies.

The CATs lay the groundwork for the projects, Beiswanger said. Local contractors bid on the projects and handle the construction.

"We provide the locals with the supplies they need to do their projects," said Army Staff Sgt. Leon Le, CAT B, Panjshir PRT. "We've assisted in building bridges, retaining walls, government buildings, schools, wells and roads."

The CAT A team goes out and makes the assessments at the sites and brings the proposal to the CAT B team, Le said. The B team then makes a determination whether the project should be funded and submits the proposal to Task



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Gary Beiswanger, Panjshir PRT

**This retaining wall in Panjshir Valley was one of the areas under consideration for repair by the Panjshir PRT civil affairs team.**

Force Tiger for approval.

Many people work together to help get these projects off the ground, Beiswanger said.

The CATs have spent approximately \$2 million for improvements in the surrounding areas, Le said. This included road construction equipment that was destroyed en route to

Panjshir Valley. The contractor was paid for the replacements, and the equipment is being used to help with construction efforts here.

"We just need to keep doing what we are doing," Le said. "They get safer and have better lives here, and we're safer at home."

## Enduring Voices

*What lessons did we learn as a nation from the events of Sept. 11th?*



**Army Staff Sgt.  
Stanley Silveira**

Bagram Airfield

*"It taught us that intelligence is key."*



**Air Force Master Sgt.  
John Edwards**

Bagram Airfield

*"That in times of crisis, we can come together as a nation."*



**Air Force Maj.  
John Sapp**

Bagram Airfield

*"In order to establish real, lasting change, we have to show real, lasting commitment."*



**Navy Petty Officer 1st  
Class Crystyn Merrill**

Bagram Airfield

*"It showed us it was time for change, so we could better protect our nation."*

# Army doctors provide medical assistance

**By Army Spc. James Tamez**  
**19th Public Affairs Detachment**

**PANJSHIR VALLEY, Afghanistan** -- Coalition medical personnel provided medical and veterinary assistance to several hundred people and more than 1,000 animals at the in Panjshir Valley and the surrounding areas Aug. 24.

"We found out that American doctors would be here today, and I wanted to bring in my son for better treatment," said Muhammad Hashim, a resident of Paryan. "My son was playing with other kids and fell down and broke his hand. It happened about 10 days ago."

Having American doctors come out to this area really adds to the quality of medical care, Hashim said. He said some experienced local elders looked at his son's hand and worked on him, but they were

not doctors. This clinic provides a higher level of care. If there are any complications, then the doctors refer patients to a hospital.

"The MEDCAP went really well," said Army Maj. Jessie McCoy, veterinarian, Civil Military Affairs Unit in Bagram. "We saw about 1,200 sheep and goats, 50 horses and donkeys, and about 50 cattle as well. We usually see about 1,000 animals a day."

This is a good chance for Coalition personnel to ensure the Afghan farmers and their livestock are healthy, said McCoy. This includes providing vaccinations and medications for a variety of ailments other than wounds.

"This process is formed around a de-worming campaign," McCoy said. "The primary medications go in the mouth and we brought additional vaccines for the cattle. If there were any additional prob-



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Leigh Bellinger, Armed Forces Network - Afghanistan

**Air Force Lt. Col. David Ferris gives a de-worming shot to a goat while Army Maj. Jessie McCoy prepares to provide the second injection.**

lems they were having, we assessed them as well."

The goal of the MEDCAP is to increase the level of medical care being provided to the people and their livestock, McCoy said.

The MEDCAP was organized in coordination with

Afghan Ministry of Public Health and Panjshir Provincial Health Office for Afghan citizens.

"We are very happy with the clinic," Hashim said. "I thank you all very much. I am very happy and satisfied with the treatment."

## Coalition forces, local leaders open school in Chamkani

**Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan News Release**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - A crowd of more than 400 Mandoo Kheyl locals were on hand Aug. 25 for the opening of a new boys and girls' school in the Chamkani District of the Paktya Province.

The district leaders and local government officials commemorated the four-month, \$75,000 construction project with a tour of the school and a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"The people of our area are working together," said Hadi Ullah, Chamkani Police Chief as he addressed the crowd. "This school is great source of pride and respect for us. Use it, protect it from the terrorists and help the government."

The school will be a center of education for both male and female children in the village and will be used as a model for subsequent area projects that fall under the

Coalition's Commander's Emergency Response Programs.

"Education is the duty of every boy and girl, said Said Shah, Chamkani's Chief Judge. "The local people will be responsible for providing security for the school. Those who assisted in making this school are helping make a better life for all of us."

For the 96th Civil Affairs Company team leader in charge of the project, the completed school is an example of local national and coalition teamwork and offers hope for future generations.

"This school is a great example of what we can accomplish when we work together," said the team leader. "I look forward to working with the local government to bring more progress to the area."

He continued, addressing the students by saying, "Take advantage of this opportunity. Study hard and do great things for your family, your tribe and your country."



US Army photo

**A large group of young girls march toward their new school that opened Aug. 25 in the village of Mandoo Kheyl.**



# Legacy of Eggers lives on at headquarters post

**By Air Force Master Sgt. Chris Miller**

**Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan public affairs**

**KABUL, Afghanistan** -- For the last five years, here in the heart of Afghanistan's largest city, lies the nerve center for the command and control of Operation Enduring Freedom, the mission born from Sept. 11, 2001, to defeat Al Qaeda and associated terrorist movements.

A coalition of 26 nations – the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, or CFC-A — is headquartered inside a brick walled compound, named after a graduate from The Citadel, U.S. Army Capt. Daniel W. Eggers.

Eggers, a Green Beret, lost his life in Afghanistan on May 24, 2004, fighting the Global War on Terror. He was killed when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device near Kandahar.

He was leading his Special Forces A Team in Zabul Province to help secure a critical part of the country and provide support to the Afghan government in a highly contested area.

The camp was named in his honor during a ceremony March 20, 2005.

The compound is next door to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's presidential palace, and down the street from the U.S. Embassy, the Italian Embassy and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters.

The Citadel grads on Camp

Eggers are keeping his legacy alive. That is particularly important now as CFC-A will transition to ISAF, a NATO command, later this year.

Army Lt. Col. (ret.) Clemson Turregano, deputy director, strategic initiatives group for CFC-A, and a 1983 Citadel graduate, says it's humbling to serve on a post named after a Citadel graduate.

"Naming the camp after Daniel Eggers simply says so much about him, the Army and The Citadel," said Turregano. "His service and sacrifice represented every Army Soldier who has given his all for the nation."

Another Citadel grad already knew Eggers from the moment he set foot on The Citadel campus as a freshman.

Air Force Capt. Wesley Maxwell, a logistics support officer here, reported to The Citadel in the fall of 1997 and was assigned to the same Company that Eggers had presided over the previous four years.

"As my classmates and I endured our 'knob' year, we were constantly reminded of the recently graduated seniors, specifically Dan Eggers," said

Maxwell. "Although I never met Dan, I felt like I knew him by the end of my first year. He was loved by his classmates and was a legend to cadets like myself who followed in his footsteps."

Eggers, from Cape Coral,



U.S. Army photo

**Army Capt. Daniel W. Eggers was killed in Afghanistan in 2004. The camp where Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan is located is named in his honor.**

Fla., was commissioned from The Citadel in May 1997, where he majored in history. He completed Special Forces training in 2002 and was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group. Following his first deployment to Afghanistan in March 2003, Eggers was assigned to Company A as a detachment commander.

"The fact he was a SF Soldier reflects a desire for excellence that is instilled at the Citadel," said Turregano. "And the fact

that today Camp Eggers is the base for U.S. Headquarters in Afghanistan is a reflection of our nation's need and desire to remember the sacrifice of not just Dan, but all these tremendous individuals who gave their lives for their country."

As a new phase of operations begins in Afghanistan, Army Capt. Daniel Eggers will never be forgotten, not by the graduates of The Citadel or anyone else who has passed through the compound gates of Camp Eggers.

**"His service and sacrifice represented every Army Soldier who has given his all for the nation."**

*Army Lt. Col. (Ret.) Clemson Turregano*

# Laghman Province looks ahead toward 2011

By Air Force Capt.

Gerardo Gonzalez

*Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team*

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE MEHTAR LAM, Afghanistan** -- With markers, poster paper and ideas in hand, Laghman Province officials, elders and mullahs gathered for a two-day workshop here Aug. 12-13 to begin crafting a five-year provincial reconstruction plan.

The workshop—a collaborative effort between the U.S. Agency for International Development, the provincial government and the Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team—helped participants identify Laghman's top issues.

"This is a great step forward for the province," said Lt. Col. Brad Bredenkamp, Mehtar Lam PRT commander and workshop participant. "To succeed you must have a plan, and that's what this workshop and those that will follow are about."

Methodical planning is the key to effective reconstruction, said Inge Fryklund, USAID field program officer. With previous experience in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Fryklund knows reconstruction is more than just completing random projects.

"Everyone wants projects," she said. "But the key is to have a desired end result and a plan to get there."

Fryklund explained that for the past 25 years, Afghans have been consumed with war and have not had the opportunity to plan for the future.

"They've been too busy dodging bullets," she said.

The 50 workshop participants were divided into eight discussion groups to identify the main issues of concern for provincial people. The governor further reiterated the point of the workshop.

"Today we came here to talk about ideas, not projects," said Governor Golab Mangal. "So we can't discuss that we must build clinics. But we can discuss that we want to improve health and in the future we'll meet to figure out how to do so."

Each group presented their results which were then combined into one master list for everyone to agree on. The top eight



Photos by Air Force Capt. Gerardo Gonzalez

**Laghman Provincial Governor Golab Mangal leads a discussion group with local officials, elders and mullahs as part of a two-day workshop to craft a five-year reconstruction plan.**

issues were roads, electricity and irrigation, education, health improvement, conservation of natural resources, security and rule of law, establishment of more religious schools (madrassas) and television and radio infrastructure improvement.

The governor gave examples related to the issues identified by the community leaders. One was religious education. Laghman Province is limited in schools offering varying levels of religious education.

"In the past we've had to send our children to neighboring countries to study Islam," said Mangal. "Unfortunately, some have come back with bad ideas and misinformation."

Security was also identified as a priority by every group during their individual sessions.

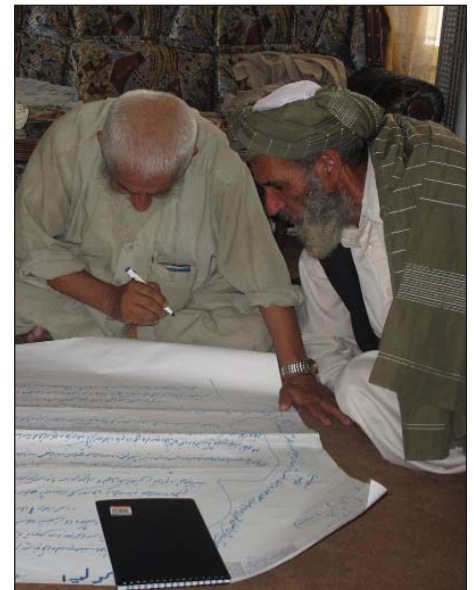
"I'm glad that we can all agree that we need to improve security," said the governor. "Because we cannot implement projects and gain the trust of the people without security."

Now that priorities have been identified, technical groups can survey requirements, funding and build plans to meet the objectives, said Mangal. Separate government sections can assume responsibility for their part of the larger five-year provincial plan. Once the groundwork is done,

donor agencies can be contacted to assist with funding.

Mangal expressed his gratitude to all participants and said he looks forward to seeing each one of them in future workshops.

"You all participated and agreed that these are the areas we need to focus on," he said. "These are your priorities and now we must go forward with fix actions."



**Laghman government officials, elders and mullahs document their top reconstruction priorities for the province during the group session of a two-day workshop.**





A young Afghan boy plays with his new toy bear in the playroom at the Kabul Orthopedic Organization.

Photos by Army Sgt. Carina M. Garcia

# Contrib

**By Army Sgt. Carina M. Garcia**  
345th Mobile Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Kabul Orthopedic Organization has received a large amount of donated clothes and toys from the United States.

The previously empty playroom is now filled with toys, games and water color paints. The donations were sent to the clinic by the 345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Buffalo, N.Y. The nurses and medical staff are retired military members, and the Professional Resources Institute is providing them here.

"We adopted this clinic to meet the needs with clothes and toys," said the medical mentor with MPAD.

Children receiving the treatment are either amputees or have endured an orthopedic injury throughout the city.

"The presence of the medical staff and the children and young adults here is a blessing," said Siawash, director for the clinic. "I had a better paying job, but this makes it all worth it."

Welch said doing this for the children of their support to the military. The clinic provides a good model for the future.



Air Force Col. Donald T. Siawash, Afghanistan surgeon general, stands in the playroom at the Kabul Orthopedic Organization.



# Donation to clinic brightens children's lives

by Ma M. Garcia

MPRI Affairs Detachment

Kabul -- Patients of the Kabul Orthopedic Organization here were greeted with bags full of donated toys in the clinic's playroom Aug.

The playroom is now filled with puzzles and colorful toys for the children thanks to a donation to the clinic by a group of nurses from the United States sent several boxes to a group of nurses, now part of the Military Professional Resources Incorporated, who in turn sent

to the clinic and are trying to meet their basic needs for toys," said Richard R. Welch, senior advisor at MPRI.

The items are all patients of the hospital who have birth defects or have been injured due to old land mines.

The MPRI and U.S. military encourages the community of adults here," said Gul Maky, director of the Kabul Orthopedic Organization. "Before, but seeing their smiles

The mission for Afghan children is an extension of the mission and their work with the organization provides a morale boost.



**Jesse Giddens, Military Professional Resources Incorporated, gives clothes and toys to an Afghan girl and her mother.**



**General Thompson, Combined Forces Command, hands a box of donated items to a staff member, director of the Kabul Orthopedic**



**Bags of donated clothes and toys are stacked in a corner of the playroom at the Kabul Orthopedic Organization**

# Mehtar Lam PRT brings relief to flood victims

**By Air Force Capt. Gerardo Gonzalez**  
**Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team**

## FORWARD OPERATING BASE MEHTAR LAM, Afghanistan

Residents of Roghano-Qalatak village in Laghman Province received a welcome surprise Aug. 16 when Coalition Humvees arrived to deliver humanitarian aid after flash floods in the area killed three people and destroyed more than 100 homes.

Afghan Government officials, the Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team and United Nations representatives traveled to one of the remote areas flooded after heavy rains overfilled the nearby Alingar River.

"We received information that the area was flooded," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Paul, Mehtar Lam PRT civil affairs noncommissioned officer. "The extent of the damage was unclear; however, we did know there were deaths."

Three did die, two children and a woman. Two other children were missing.

Many villagers lost a vital resource in this rural community—farm animals.

"Four of our cows are gone. They're probably dead," said Mohammed Taher. Taher, an Afghan National Army soldier stationed in Kandahar, came home immediately after learning of the disaster. His mission now was to help his 16 family members, mostly women and children, salvage what remained of their damaged home. He said many of the rooms in the house collapsed.

While part of Taher's home was spared, other villagers



Photos by Air Force 2nd Lt. Melissa Stevens

**Air Force Capt. Walter Christian and 1st Lt. Bernice Logan, both civil affairs officers with the Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team, hand out humanitarian aid supplies Aug. 16 to a resident of Roghano-Qalatak village. Flash floods in the area killed three people and destroyed more than 100 homes.**

were not as fortunate and some lost everything.

"My home is completely destroyed," said Ahmad Khan, a village elder. "I don't have anything now, not even a pillow."

Khan was one of the humanitarian aid recipients that day. The PRT donated enough supplies for 120 families, said Paul.

"We always keep pre-packaged food supplies ready for individual family distribution," said Paul. "The villagers were very appreciative."

Each food bag contained rice, beans and cooking oil. Villagers also received tarps, sacks filled with tea, hygiene kits, first-aid supplies and other items, said Paul. Many were

surprised with what they received.

"I think they expected to get a lot less than what they were actually given," said Paul. "Some of the people held out their hands limply expecting about three or four pounds (worth of items), when actually they were getting 30 to 40 pounds worth."

The assistance visit also provided a unique opportunity for the locals to not only get help from the PRT but also to bond with the troops. Because these villages are in very remote locations they don't often see coalition military, said Paul.

"These villages are isolated," he said. "These villages don't get a lot of attention from any-

body."

According to Paul, the significant military presence and helping nature of the visit was a positive experience. When PRT members were not handing out supplies they played games and chatted with local youth.

"Everybody actually had a good time," said Paul. "When you go into a disaster zone and everybody ends up laughing and smiling, you know you had a successful mission."

"Thank you very much for coming out to help us today," said Khan the elder. "We are happy to accept the humanitarian aid supplies and hope the PRT can help us in the future as well."



# Kandahar Airfield hosts Afghan National Police conference

**By Army Maj. Nancy Hansen**  
**345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

**KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** – Combined Task Force Aegis hosted a conference for the Afghan National Police here Aug. 26 and 27 to provide a forum for the discussion of strategic issues relevant to the development of the police force in Regional Command South currently under International Security Assistance Force control.

The objective during this initial conference was to identify the issues in each southern province requiring strategic direction and guidance. The intent is to achieve a more coherent approach and coordination of effort by the ANP throughout RC-South.

Among those in attendance was the ANP Commander for the Regional Training Center, Gen. Nasrullah Zarifi.

“This conference is very good for addressing our security issues and our operations and we should have more of these,” he said.

Zarifi was eager to tackle a serious issue faced by trained ANP who are not being permitted to conduct operations at their assigned posts.

“They are very well trained at the RTC and prepared to do their police jobs, but once sent to the provinces, they are often told by local police authorities to forget what they had learned,” he said.

Zarifi added that corruption at the province and district levels among policing

authorities is a major problem and that the ANP needs to legitimize its police force by cleaning up the corruption. He further explained that to legitimize means to enable police, build professionalism, credibility, and public acceptance of the ANP.

“We’ve had a war in Afghanistan for 30 years,” said Afghan Maj. Gen. Esmatullah Darrlatzai, ANP Commander for RC-South. “We have four major threats that we have to overcome; the Taliban, al Qaeda, narcotics and corruption. These are the main targets for the ANSF and Coalition forces in Afghanistan. We are trying to eliminate these threats and once we do, we can get the ANP into the towns and villages to do the job of policing.”

Rebalancing and recruiting were two major ANP efforts underway discussed at the conference. Rebalancing involves the redistribution of ANP officers to designated high security areas throughout the country.

Recruiting efforts include a process that recommends a short-term contract for those who want to become an auxiliary ANP. The ANP will provide training, a uniform, identification and also payment for service as an auxiliary officer. At the end of the contract, the auxiliary officer could apply to become a permanent member of the ANP.

“We will recruit 21,000 ANP because the situation in the country requires it,” said Esmatullah. He also added that through recruiting of an auxiliary police force, they

hoped to achieve the recruitment goals.

The issue of militias or small security forces, often belonging to the provincial and district leaders, was another topic of concern for the ANP. Often corrupt, some militias defeat the efforts of the trained ANP. The problem of how to get the militia to transition into to trained ANP officers and to serve as ANP auxiliary forces is one that concerns provinces throughout the country.

“My recommendation is not to use the word militia anymore,” said Esmatullah. “There is only one word, and that is ANP. There are two types, permanent and non-permanent (auxiliary).”

Representatives in attendance from provincial ANP units discussed and proposed solutions for a number of other concerns including the need to clearly distinguish the role of the ANP versus other forces within the ANSF, issues concerning pay, uniforms, police identification cards, identification and training of potential leaders, ongoing mentorship, and development of facilities and infrastructure throughout the ANP forces in southern Afghanistan.

Although there are many challenges that lay ahead for ANP, one thing is clear -- the ANP leadership is committed to constructing an efficient and effective policing organization. They are focused on the future and assuring the safety and security for the civilian population in the towns and villages in Afghanistan.



## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

**Soldiers assigned to the 277th Aviation Support Battalion fire M249 Squad Automatic Weapons during range training.**

Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Luis R. Heredia  
 277th Aviation Support Battalion

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to [freedomwatch@baf.af.mil](mailto:freedomwatch@baf.af.mil). Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

# Afghan leaders discuss future plans in Khost Province

By Air Force Master Sgt.

David Byron

CJTF-76 public affairs

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -**

Officials from the Afghan central and provincial governments and Coalition leaders participated in a Shura in Khowst City on Aug. 24.

A Shura is a council meeting of area leaders. The Khowst meeting included Arsala Jamal, the provincial governor, and provincial line directors and council members from throughout Khost Province.

Also attending were Eshan Zia, Afghanistan's minister of rural rehabilitation and development, and Canadian Brig. Gen. Daniel Pepin, Combined Joint Task Force-76 deputy commanding general for effects.

"This was not a Coalition-driven meeting," said Pepin. "We simply provided support and guidance to make it happen."

The meeting's primary purpose was to demonstrate the central government's support for Governor Jamal. This included discussing the governor's plans and priorities for reconstruction and the effective use of the Provincial Development Council. The event demonstrated cooperation between the different levels of government.

Zia reinforced the central government's support and commitment to Jamal's future plans for the province.

Discussions were productive and Shura members were supportive of the new governor and his vision for Khost, said those in attendance.

Pepin reiterated to attendees that the Coalition is not the only organization that can bring about reconstruction. He explained that various levels of Afghan government and several non-governmental organizations truly want to assist in fostering progress in the region.

"The PRT can facilitate bringing these organizations together for the betterment of the province," Pepin said. "But the Coalition can only support, not carry out, these plans."

Prior to the Shura, Zia, Shamal and Pepin met with officials from the Coalition's Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team and were briefed on current Coalition-sponsored projects in the province.

The Coalition funds many projects across Afghanistan through the use of funds from the Commander's Emergency Response Program. Currently, Khost Province is the second largest user of these funds for the current fiscal year.



**Canadian Brig. Gen. Daniel Pepin, Combined Joint Task Force-76 deputy commanding general for effects, and Khost Governor Arsala Jamal are briefed on the status of projects at the Coalition's Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team.**



Photos by Air Force Master Sgt. David Byron

**Eshan Zia, Afghanistan's minister of rural rehabilitation and development, discusses the central government's support of the governor's plans.**

In Khost Province, CERP officials have committed more than \$5.5 million in obligated funds, just behind Paktika Province at nearly \$8.5 million.

CERP funds are used to finance non-security related reconstruction projects like new roads or clinics.

The provincial governor requests the funds for specific projects, Coalition officials evaluate the requests to ensure they falls within established guidelines and, if approved, requested funds are set aside to pay for projects, preferably using Afghan businesses.

Coalition officials also monitor progress on the projects to ensure they are completed at suitable standards of quality in workmanship and materials.

"We are not only aiming to improve security and development in Afghanistan," said Pepin, "we are working to build government capacity within the Afghan society."



# National Command Element helps Afghan women get to school

**By Army Sgt. Mayra Kennedy**  
**345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

## KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

-- The U.S. National Command Element here donated two mini-vans to the Albironi Institute of Information and Technology on Aug. 16, only weeks after a needs assessment of the school was made by the 405th Civil Affairs unit.

Army Col. R-Stephen Williams, 207th Infantry Brigade and NCE commander from the Alaska National Guard, along with members of the NCE staff delivered the mini-vans.

Williams explained that after completing a review on the Albironi institute, he was anxious to help out right away.

"We went to the school and spoke to the education minister and decided that it would be great to provide them with school materials and equipment," said Williams, from Chugiak, Alaska. "We found they needed some type of transportation to drive the women around, mainly for security. We thought, if we can get them two vehicles, the school could pick them up in areas where there may be a



Photos by Army Sgt. Mayra Kennedy

**Army Pfc. Lydia Edwards, supply clerk with the 207th Infantry Brigade, Alaska National Guard, meets with an English instructor, Sakina Sekanader, during her second visit to the Albironi Institute of Information Technology.**

security concern."

These vehicles will provide safe and reliable transportation to the school for the women, enabling them to get the education they seek. Presently, the institute instructs girls from age six to women in their 40s.

"There are many brave women here putting themselves out there who realize that there are opportunities for them," he said. "It was pretty exciting to see these women

who have never had the opportunity to get an education during the Taliban regime to try to learn English, read and write, and work on computers."

The NCE also donated school supplies and two stationary bikes for the students at the Albironi institute. Williams commented that in addition to the transportation issue, women at the institute expressed their interest in getting in shape and being healthy.

"The women wanted to have a gym so they could get in shape," he said. "They sounded just like American women."

Albironi's School Manager, Haji Qassam Assadullah, received the bikes, mini-vans and school supplies. He expressed hope that more women would become part of the institute.

The school has been open for only a year, but it already has approximately 1,300 students, 300 of which are females, said the Administra-

tion Deputy Director, Esmate Muslin.

Army Pfc. Lydia Edwards, a supply clerk for the 207th Inf. Bde., had the opportunity to interact with many of the women at the institute during the visit, including Sakina Sekanader, 21, an English instructor.

"I was impressed by them because they were very talkative," said Edwards, who is a juvenile justice officer from Kenai, Alaska. "One of the girls practiced her English by reading to me."

Edwards was asked about America and the opportunities available to women there. She says she admires these women because they were courageous enough to go out, despite security issues to better themselves and contribute to their country.

"I learned a lot from them and their culture," said Edwards. "They are driven, intelligent, strong Afghan women."



**The U.S. National Command Element delivered school supplies, two mini-vans and three stationary bikes to the Albironi Institute of Information Technology.**

# 'A & O Platoon' clears path to success in Zormat

By Army Sgt. 1st Class

Michael Pintagro

Task Force Spartan public affairs

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE GARDEZ, Afghanistan** -- Members of Task Force Spartan, Coalition partners and the 203rd Afghan National Army Corps depend heavily on reliable roads for successful mechanized ground movements through southeastern Afghanistan.

Combat engineers from Assault and Obstacle Platoon, Alpha Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion helped pave the way for allied and Spartan success during a deliberate route clearance mission conducted Aug. 29 in the Zormat District of eastern Afghanistan's Paktya Province.

According to Army Capt. Perry O. Stiemke, the A Co., 3rd BSTB commander, such missions ensure allied access to crucial routes through Paktya and Logar Provinces.

"We want to maintain freedom of movement within our areas," said Stiemke, from Philadelphia. "One way we do that is through deliberate route clearance within the area. This will allow us to operate in the region later on."

Army 1st Lt. Samuel Colby, the leader of A & O Platoon, noted that past improvised explosive device activity determined the Zormat route.

"There are several places along the route where we've found IEDs in the past month or so," he said.

Colby spoke from experience. One of his vehicles recently struck an IED while traveling through the district. The Piscataway, N.J., native also added A Co. Soldiers "got into a direct-fire engagement" in the vicinity of the town of Khorkeyel in late April.

"It's one of two routes between Zormat and Ghazni, and the most heavily traveled," he said of the road his men set out to clear. The entire region "is a fairly crucial piece of ground. The district roads and the route going through the 'K-G' Pass are historic IED hot spots in the region."

According to Army 2nd Lt. Tyler Sweatt, who will soon replace Colby as



Photos by Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Pintagro

**Army Spec. Matthew Haag, a combat engineer with Assault & Obstacle Platoon, A Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, checks a culvert for evidence of explosives during a route clearance mission.**

'PL', leaders typically select sites of past IED attacks and such "dangerous areas" as soft ground, culverts (water tunnels) and abutments (where bridges meet adjoining ground) for deliberate clearance.

The 23-year-old Clinton, N.J., native added that patrolling Soldiers look for anything out of the ordinary. He said if there are usually a lot of people somewhere like a bazaar and no one's around, that can be a warning sign.

"You're looking for antennas, wires or anything that's out of place," said Army Spc. Nicholas Connole, a San Antonio, Texas, native serving as a medic with the platoon.

Connole typically moves on foot with the clearance team in order to remain nearby in the event of traumas, heat casualties or emergencies. Terrorists, he said, sometimes disguise explosive devices within bushes, trees, plastic bags, soft ground, rocks, bottles, boxes and even soda cans.

According to key platoon leaders, enemy IED placement usually follows certain patterns.

"Historically, when they put an IED in

a certain place, they're likely to put another one there," said Army Staff Sgt.

Roman Espinoza, the organization's platoon sergeant, pointing to the Pech River Road as one example of a heavily mined route.

"The ground is so hard that it takes a lot of work to prepare it for an IED," explained the Watertown, N.Y., resident. "Once the ground is softened up, they'll take advantage of the loose ground to plant another one. Most times, they'll put them in a place like a dip in the road where the ground is soft. The bad thing about an IED is you usually don't find it until it finds you."

According to Sweatt, company leaders make a point of collaborating with the ANA.

"We partner with ANA Soldiers and ETTs whenever possible," Sweatt said. "They make a contribution, and this way when we leave they know how to do the mission themselves."

Arriving at the clearance route, Soldiers conduct "five and 25 checks," inspecting the area around the vehicles and then checking the surrounding area. Soldiers

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## A&O, from Page 14

participating in clearing operations patrol their beat. Working in buddy teams, they walk the road, inspecting possible IED sites and anything suspicious. Weapons at the ready, they clear possible hiding places and sanctuaries.

The Soldiers conduct low-tech searches along most of the routes, but occasionally employ sophisticated equipment in their hunt for explosives. Platoon personnel might sweep particularly suspicious locations with mine detectors, for instance.

While the buddy teams patrol the road and adjacent grounds, mounted Soldiers provide security, communicate with home base and each other, and track the progress of clearing operations.

When they encounter possible IEDs, the platoon usually contacts an explosive ordnance detachment or explosive exploitation cell, sealing off the area for the protection of fellow Soldiers and civilians.

"If we find something, we generally cordon off the site and call EOD or SECC," Sweatt said. "We want to ensure no local nationals come in contact with the IED."

Engineers by trade, A & O Platoon Soldiers adapted readily to the route clearance mission. Battalion leaders also maximized their Soldiers' preparation, sending the platoon to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., the fall prior to the Operation Enduring Freedom rotation to refine their skills.

One engineer participated in a "train the trainer" course; another performed route clearing missions during a previous rotation.

Route clearance represents only one aspect of the platoon's mission. The versatile combat engineer's man vehicle control points and checkpoints, make village assessments, remove unexploded ordnance, conduct presence patrols, provide blocking positions for other units and perform quick reaction force duty.

The challenging and wide-ranging mission contributed to the development of a winning team.

"I think this team functions extremely well," said Connole, whose medical background allows him an outsider's perspective. "They work well together. All in all, I couldn't work for a better team."

The team members draw on each other for support, companionship and inspiration during the long rides and longer missions. Most importantly, they depend implicitly on each other when the chips are down.

"If we don't protect each other, someone might not come home," observed Army Cpl. Merlin Quiles, a 21-year-old combat engineer from Houston who serves with the A & O Platoon.

At the same time, the platoon's young leaders appreciate the organization's contribution to a larger purpose.

"Every now and then you do a mission and you get a sense that 'I did something good for the country,'" Colby said.



**Army Sgt. Pamion Wilson, a combat engineer with Assault & Obstacle Platoon, A Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, provides security for his convoy.**



**Army 1st Lt. Samuel Colby, the leader of Assault & Obstacle Platoon, A Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, departs a deserted compound he checked for explosives and enemy activity.**



# *Freedom Watch*

*September 11, 2006*

**"Why should we be frightened? No people who have ever lived on this earth have fought harder, paid a higher price for freedom, or done more to advance the dignity of man than the living Americans, those Americans living in this land today."**

**-Ronald Reagan**